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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000873

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/23/2026
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY/IRAQ: MFA HEARS OUR VIEWS ON MUQTADA
AL-SADR VISIT

REF: A. STATE 27111

- [1](#)B. ANKARA 0721
- [1](#)C. ANKARA 0787 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. We have made USG views on a possible visit to Turkey by Muqtada al-Sadr (ref a) known to Foreign Minister Gul as well as working level MFA officials. The MFA understands our views and it remains inclined to receive Sadr, although the timing is unclear. We have urged MFA officials to meet Sadr at the lowest possible level and send him the unambiguous message that he cannot advocate violence and seek to participate in the political process at the same time. We have also encouraged the MFA to ensure that any public statements about the visit clearly reflect this message. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) As noted in ref c (NOTAL), Ambassador raised the issue of a Muqtada al-Sadr visit during a private meeting February 20 with FM Gul, noting U.S. concerns and urging caution. We followed up and delivered the full message to GOT Iraqi Coordinator Oguz Celikkol. Celikkol said he understands our views and admitted he did not relish the prospect of a Sadr visit. He said he expects "internal and external" pressures on Turkey to receive Sadr to mount, although the MFA hopes to put off the visit as long as possible.

[1](#)3. (C) Separately, Celikkol deputy Fazli Corman told us the MFA appreciates and shares our views on Sadr. However, after long and "difficult" discussions, the MFA is close to a consensus that the government should allow Sadr to visit in order to maintain "consistency" in Turkey's policy of meeting with all parts of the Iraqi political spectrum. Corman argued that Sadr controls 30-plus assembly members and exercises considerable popular influence. He noted that Sadr is traveling extensively in the region and is being welcomed at the highest levels, including in Jordan.

[1](#)4. (C) Corman said that FM Gul would likely meet with Sadr. A call on Prime Minister Erdogan is also possible, but not yet decided. Corman assured us the GOT would not accord Sadr the kind of welcome he has received in Jordan and other capitals, but at the same time does not want to insult him by receiving him at too low a level. He added that the GOT has

not yet issued Sadr a formal invitation and has sought to delay doing so for as long as possible.

¶5. (C) We told Corman that, should the GOT decide to receive Sadr, it should do so at the lowest possible level and send him the unambiguous message that he cannot advocate violence and seek to participate in the political system at the same time. We also stressed that the GOT should reflect, in any public statements concerning the visit, the strong message it conveys to Sadr.

WILSON